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ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4237  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 6248  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3923  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3782  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 4492  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1481  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 4395  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000202

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PHUM KWMN SCUL SOCI PGOV TX

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: NEW WOMEN'S COATS INTENDED TO  
IMPROVE MORALS

REF: 09 ASHGABAT 1680

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for Public  
Internet.

¶2. (SBU) In January, the Turkmen Government introduced a new unwritten dress code for female government officials, secondary school students and university students, to be worn at official government events. Although it has not been published anywhere, people have been told that the dress code requires women and girls to wear a loose fitting coat, with embroidery on the hemline, long sleeves and a high collar, over the traditional Turkmen ankle-length dress with modest neckline. (COMMENT: We have seen Turkmen female high-level government officials wearing these coats. END COMMENT.)

(NOTE: Despite the intended modesty of traditional dresses, some styles with a body-tight fit and slits up the sides clearly circumvent that intent. END NOTE.) The newly-mandated coats should be black for government officials and red for students. While the coats must be worn year-round, women are allowed to have winter versions and summer versions, made of heavier or lighter material. A student at the Institute of Economy and Management told Embassy economic assistant that she paid a dressmaker \$100 to make the required coat. (NOTE: The average monthly salary in Turkmenistan is \$200. END NOTE.)

¶3. (SBU) According to a secondary school teacher, the government decided to introduce the new dress code to stop Turkmen women from wearing provocative western-style outfits, which supposedly cause a decline in morality among the younger generation of the country. The teacher said that students in her class were passing via cell phone a video clip of a Turkmen female performing a strip dance. Reportedly, there were also incidents of secondary school students being caught sharing locally made pornographic images via cell phones. The teacher added that the government had tried to forbid students bringing cell phones to

class, but that effort failed.

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: This is not the first time that the government has put restrictions on women to correct problems that it sees in society. In the past, the government introduced a foreign travel ban for women under the age of 30 and encouraged female government officials not to drive (reftel). Although the government cannot enforce these restrictions for private citizens, it can pressure government employees and students to follow even unwritten rules. END COMMENT.

CURRAN